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NEWS RELEASE

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PROTECTING VOTING RIGHTS A TOP PRIORITY, SAYS U.S. ATTORNEY ERIC MELGREN

MISSOURI MAN FACES FEDERAL CHARGES OF PROVIDING FALSE INFORMATION TO ELECTION OFFICIALS IN KANSAS

KANSAS CITY, KAN. – As the November election approaches, federal law enforcement agencies in Kansas already are at work to prevent voter fraud and voting rights abuses, United States Attorney Eric Melgren said Thursday.

“As much as or more than any other time in recent memory, the nation’s attention is focused on the upcoming November election,” Melgren said. “Our goal is to ensure the public is confident in the integrity of the election process. We will do that by providing local points of contact where the public can report possible election fraud and voting rights violations. And we will prosecute offenses whenever and wherever they occur.”

Melgren said he doesn’t anticipate any problems with the elections in Kansas. But he has teamed up with state election officials to assure the public that any citizen complaints of possible voting rights violations will be received and investigated.

On Thursday, Melgren joined Kansas Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh, Kansas Attorney General Phil Kline, Wyandotte County Election Commissioner Pat Rahija and Johnson County Election Commissioner Connie Schmidt at the Wyandotte County Courthouse Annex in Kansas City, Kan., to focus on their shared objective of making voting easier – and cheating harder.

Melgren urged citizens to join him in the U.S. Department of Justice’s long-standing nationwide Election Day Program.

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“Election fraud and voting rights abuses dilute the worth of votes honestly cast,” he said. “They also corrupt the essence of our representative form of government. As crimes against both the individual and the government, they will be dealt with promptly and aggressively. Anyone who has information suggesting electoral or voting rights abuses should make that information available immediately to my office, the FBI or the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice.”

Protecting the integrity of the election process is not a job only for government agencies, said Secretary of State Thornburgh.

“Today, I am requesting help from all eligible voters and specifically requesting they join us to combat voter fraud,” Thornburgh said. “If any voter is aware of any type of election corruption or voter fraud that has occurred or is occurring please let us know.”

Attorney General Kline added: “Free and fair elections are the foundation of our form of government. We will continue to work diligently to protect the integrity of the voting process.”

Melgren announced Thursday that federal charges have been filed against Leslie E. McIntosh, 67, of 3622 Norton Avenue in Kansas City, Mo. McIntosh is charged with providing false information to Kansas election officials so he could vote in Kansas in 2000 and 2002.

According to a criminal complaint filed in U.S. District Court in Kansas City, Kan., McIntosh furnished false information to election officials saying he lived at 1936 N. 5th, #1, in Kansas City, Kan. Although he owned property at that address – which, according to the complaint, was a commercial building with a barber shop and pool hall – his residence was in Kansas City, Mo.

According to the complaint, on Nov. 7, 2000 McIntosh appeared at a Wyandotte County polling place located in a church and signed the polling place roster, which said, “I, the undersigned, declare under penalty of perjury that I am a duly qualified elector in the State of Kansas, County of Wyandotte, that I have not signed a name other than my own in order to represent myself as any other registered voter, and that I have not previously voted and will not vote again in this election.”

According to the complaint, McIntosh voted the same day in Kansas City, Mo., and certified on a polling place roster that he lived at 3622 Norton Avenue in Kansas City, Mo. Two years later, according to the complaint, McIntosh did the same thing again on Nov. 5, 2002.

If convicted, McIntosh faces up to five years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine. The

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case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Leon Patton.

As in any criminal case, a person is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. The charges filed merely contain allegations of criminal conduct.

Melgren said Patton is serving as District Election Officer. In that capacity, Patton is the lead attorney in the investigation and prosecution of any federal election fraud matters in Kansas, and coordinates the district's efforts with Department of Justice prosecutors in Washington, D.C.

Patton and assigned FBI agents will be on duty in this district while the polls are open on election day to receive complaints of election fraud. Patton can be reached by the public in Kansas City, Kan. at (913) 551-6730.

The United States Attorneys' office may also be reached on election day in Topeka at 785-295-2850, and in Wichita at 316-269-6481. Complaints about ballot access problems or discrimination can also be made directly to the Civil Rights Division's Voting Section in Washington, D.C. at 1-800-253-3931 or 202-307-2767.

The FBI also will have special agents available in each field office and resident agency in Kansas to receive allegations of election fraud on election day. The FBI can be reached by the public in Wichita at (316) 262-0031; in Topeka at (785) 235-3811; and in Kansas City at (816) 512-8200.

"I have the utmost confidence in the officials here today and especially all county election officers in their ability to administer a fair, accurate, accessible and secure election," stated Thornburgh. "In order to ensure the most access to all voters, you must take away all security. In order to make the election process most secure, you must take away all access. We must strive to meet a balance between access and security in the election process. This partnership will allow us to accomplish an appropriate balance."

U.S. Attorney Melgren stated that most forms of election crime are easily recognized, such as voter bribery, voter intimidation, and ballot forgery. Other forms of election fraud are more subtle. It is, for example, a federal offense to seek out the elderly, the socially disadvantaged, or the illiterate for the purpose fraudulently casting their ballots. Furthermore, every voter has the right to mark his or her ballot in private, free from the watchful eye of election partisans.

"Four years ago, the election was close enough that some people may have realized for the first time that every vote really does count," Melgren said. "The November 2004

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election may be another close one. That makes it all the more important that we work hard to safeguard the integrity of the election process.”

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